

FLYING OVER LONDON AND OTHER VERSES

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

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Flying Over London

And Other Verses

BY
LYNN HAROLD HOUGH



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Foreword

DURING the tense years from 1914 to 1918 many men and women who had been quite contented to be pedestrians moving to the time of a steady and dependable prose, found themselves tempted to try the wings of verse. Some men found the old lyric impulse of college days returning and bent their words to unaccustomed measures. The verses which follow came from such a motive, and the only reason for their appearance in this form is that they have served some sort of purpose in aiding in the mobilization of the invisible resources of the people as they have been published in periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic, and a good many people both in England and America have asked for them.

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH.

Flying Over London

(Written October 2, 1918, after a flight over
London in a British warplane)

THE mighty whirling horses of the car
Plunged madly through the highways of the
sky,

Like homesick meteors from some far star,
Scorning the world and its low destiny,
Whom some kind god had given wings to
fly
Back to their planet's distant mystery.

The winds reached out great leaping arms of
power,
Strong in their ancient heritage of might,
But bent like abject slaves that shake and
cower

In sudden shattering and unmanly fright,
When there uncoils in hissing serpent's spite
The menace of the lash above their fearful
sight.

The earth sends forth its clutching hands of
force
Which held men chained below in all the
years;

The car climbs upward in its regal course
Among high-flying birds, its only peers.

It has subdued all crouching human fears,
It has fulfilled the daring dreams of seers.

Wide spread below are towns and fields of
green,
On to the edges of the purple sea;
And there in clear distinctness sharply seen
Is London in her queenly majesty;
Her spires and palaces and homes you see,
The heart of a great empire strong and free.

The silver ribbon of the sparkling Thames
Winds through the city on its shining way;
The sunlight glistens as a million gems
Send from their facets each a glittering ray;
And by the river in the distance there
Saint Paul's Cathedral summons men to
prayer.

We circle grandly o'er the ancient town,
We taste the triumphs of audacious flight;
Then strangely presses that most cruel crown
Whose thorns draw blood in many a far-
flung fight;
For all the world a tragic, broken star
Is held in the remorseless clutches of the war.

But upward, upward, moves our certain way,
And upward, upward, is the world's bold
flight,
Up from the cruelties of this dread day,
Up from the heart-breaks of this bitter
night;
Up to the highways of the common good,
Up to the radiant heights of Brotherhood.

The Khaki and the Blue

A LONELY boy is walking down the street,
Miles from all the jolly friends he used to
meet,

And his hungry eyes are eating up the town.
But the bright electric glitter,
Makes his heart grow cold and bitter,
And he sees the shining pageant with a
frown.

For the right doors are shut tight,
To the boy that's got to fight;
And the wrong doors open wide—
Laughing lawless forms inside.
There are thousands of this boy,
Either heartbreak or great joy,
And

for you,

for you,

These boys wear the khaki and the blue.

A jackie with the sea swell in his gait
Seems to some of your gay townsmen easy
bait,

When the wonder of the city fills his eyes.
The old cruiser's in the bay,
And his pocket's full of pay.

The way he spends his money's a surprise.
There are traps all down the street
For this heedless sailor's feet,
And a money-loving nation
Makes the town one big temptation;
There are thousands of this lad,
Victims of our gold lust mad,
Yet

for you,

for you,

These boys wear the khaki and the blue.

A Sammy has come in from the old fort,
A hunting for a night of lively sport,
He's as restless as a horse man never
broke;

A good many things you've prized
Seem to him too civilized,

And he'd like to blow conventions up in
smoke;

You have got to understand him,
It will never do to brand him.

Find the worth that is inside,
Feel his power with manly pride.
There are thousands of this fellow,
And you mustn't call him yellow,
As

for you,

for you,

These boys wear the khaki and the blue.

There's a sturdy boy who must not know
defeat,
As he's fighting in the trenches of our street,
With his eager eyes a turning to the light.
He has found he's got a soul,
And a body to control,
And a God who'll give him victory in the
fight.
He will come through this thing straight,
He will help his weaker mate,
Clean of mind and strong of limb,
A man every inch of him;
With him comes an army strong,
Lifting their bold battle song,
As

for you,

for you,

These boys wear the khaki and the blue.

And now these merry boys are off for France,
Brave as any knight that ever bore a lance,

In their blood there burns the passion of
the war;

In the cantonments they're drilling,
All the transports they are filling,

And they hear the trenches calling from
afar;

Ocean highways they patrol,
Through the air they seek their goal.

With a will to win the fight,

With a sturdy virile might,

There they go a million strong,

To the colors they belong;

And

for you,

for you,

These boys wear the khaki and the blue.

Fathers and Sons Together

OUR hands and our boys' hands
Are joined in a grip unbroken,
Though they fight in far stern lands,
'Mid tragedies unspoken.

Our eyes and our boys' eyes
Gleam with one high decision.
Our skies and their skies
Shine with one radiant vision.

Our feet and our boys' feet
March to one mighty chorus.
We meet where the drums beat,
And the flag goes on before us.

Our wills and our boys' wills
Are tense for the great endeavor.
One thought our mind fills—
All peoples free forever.

Our hearts and our boys' hearts
Are joined in one deep devotion;
Joy starts and fear departs,
Despite the severing ocean.

Our lives and our boys' lives
Are gifts to the mother nation,
While the old world in travail strives
For birth's great consummation.

A Mother's Thoughts

YOUR eyes are shining in my heart to-night;
Are they shining bright in France?
Your face is glowing with courageous light;
Is it strong and firm in France?

Your voice is singing in my heart to-night;
Does it lift gay songs in France?
You're all a-tingle for the great, stern fight;
Have you kept your zeal in France?

Your feet are marching in my heart to-night;
Do they keep bold time in France?
Your arms are stalwart with a soldier's might;
Do they do brave deeds in France?

You're a spotless baby in my arms to-night;
Are you clean and true in France?
You have said the old prayer in the waning
light;
Have you kept the faith in France?

I can see flags waving in your soul to-night;
Are they floating high in France?
The flags of freedom and the flags of right—
Are you true to them in France?

I sit here lonely in the still, dark night,
But my heart's with you in France.
I pray God keep you in his own great might,
And I fight with you in France.

The Light in the Soldiers' Eyes

I LISTENED to the crash of wild explosion,
As fierce-winged shells moved madly
through the air,
I saw the chaos and the red confusion
Of battlefields with terror everywhere;
Then with a sudden gleam of strange surprise
I saw the bright light in the soldiers' eyes.

As men dashed on with bayonets set for
charging,
Their bodies tense, their arms—steel grip-
ping steel,
A thousand memories their hearts enlarging,
In war's hot passion love's far-flung appeal;
Like golden shining of the sunset skies,
I saw the bright light in the soldiers' eyes.

The arms of far-off children clasping tightly
The necks of men held in war's hard
embrace,
Invisible loved faces smiling brightly,
With old-time witchery and tender grace—
Though all about death's ghostly shadows lie,
These bring the light to the soldier's eye.

A dream of men in new strong bonds united,
Beyond the burning fever of the strife,
A dream of hope beyond the world benighted
Where war has bivouacked at the death of
life;
A dream of that new day which shall arise,
This brings the bright light to the soldiers'
eyes.

I saw the daybreak with the sun's glad gleam-
ing,
The Easter daybreak with a world at peace,
After Golgotha with its deaths redeeming,
After the suffering which wrought release;
I knew then the meaning of the tortured cries,
I saw the bright light in the soldiers' eyes.

Seeing England

I

ON a train for London bound,
While the wheels moved round and round,
Gliding swiftly on the rails,
Whispering untranslated tales
Of men traveling up and down,
Of the vast mysterious town,
I beheld a lad's bright face,
With its haunting fresh young grace,

With its joy of unused power,
With youth's happy, magic dower,
As if God had smiled with joy,
Giving to the world this boy.
Now his face was set for France,
And his eyes flashed like a lance,
Eager, dauntless, strong, and bright,
Ready for the last hard fight.
I saw the hope of England.

II

On a dull, gray winter's day,
When cold winds went forth to play,
When the streets were dark and chill,
And life lost its quickening thrill,
I beheld a man's hard face,
Like a runner in a race,
Rigid, tense, and sternly strong,
For endurance hard and long.
There was heartbreak in his eyes,
And a cruel pained surprise,
At life's tragic tides of grief,
Wave on wave without relief.
Yet his purpose as a fire,
Leaping, flaming ever higher
Through his solid self-control,
Pierced its way into my soul.
I saw the strength of England.

III

By a dim lamp's flickering light
On a London street at night,
While the war, a huge black cloud,
Wrapped the city like a shroud,
I beheld a woman's face,
Stern and sad, yet full of grace.
In her deep and tragic eyes
I saw sorrows' mysteries,
Yet beneath the poignant pain
I could feel a sense of gain,
As if she had power to see
High things hidden far from me.
Though grief left its bitter trace,
There was splendor in her face.
By the trembling yellow light,
In the shadows of the night,
I saw the soul of England.

When Christ Came

I

When the Lord Christ came to Britain
In a chariot of fire,
With the war clouds tossing round him,
In a passion of desire,

He tested the soul of England
In the furnace of the fight,
And the dross burned up like tinder,
But the gold shone pure and bright.
For four years the great white Captain
Led his hosts by sea and land;
For four years the Allied nations
Followed at his high command.
When the Lord Christ came to Britain
In a chariot of flame,
England's soldiers proudly answered
When the Captain called their name.

II

When the Lord Christ came to Britain,
Wafted on white wings of Peace,
When the sky was bright with promise
Of the coming of release,
Far away the tides of battle
Felt the power of his royal will,
And the guns in their belching fury,
Heard his kingly word: "Be still,"
Then the darkened streets of England
Saw the end of their heavy night,
And the darkened hearts of England
Saw the coming of the light.

And the implements of battle
All became forgotten things,
When the Lord Christ came to the nations
With glad healing in his wings.

III

Now the Lord Christ comes to Britain
In the joy of the Christmas bells,
As ringing and singing and ringing
Their jubilant anthem swells.
And it's joy to the mothers and fathers,
And joy to the daughters and sons,
And peace to wide-lying nations,
And "Cease firing" to the guns,
And it's comfort to broken-hearted,
And balm for the souls in pain,
And a promise of forgiveness
And new life for evil men.
The Lord Christ has come to his people
With a power that knows no decrease,
And he stands this glorious Christmas
The Imperial Prince of Peace.

Over the Sea

OVER the sea I hear bells ringing,
Over the sea I hear glad singing,
Over the sea a message bringing
Of peace and victory.

Over the sea the sun is beaming,
Over the sea the banners streaming,
Over the sea the rainbows gleaming,
 With peace and liberty.

Over the sea the culprit nations
See their broken expectations,
Watch their failing machinations,
 With fear of victory.


Over the sea the tyrants cower,
Seeing the sight of their waning power,
After their little cruel hour,
 And fear reigns over the sea.

Over the sea the earth is shaking,
I hear the sound of the chains that are break-
 ing,

I see the eyes of the slaves that are waking
 To freedom over the sea.

Over the sea the Allies sought it,
Over the sea the soldiers bought it,
Over the sea the heroes wrought it,
 Freedom over the sea.

Over the sea the Allied nations
Drink on this day their glad libations,
Celebrate with high jubilations
 The day of victory.



Over the sea the morn dawns clear,
And mighty hope casts out all fear,
For all the world good days draw near,
 With victory over the sea.

Over the sea the prophet's voice
Is singing the song of the Allies' choice,
And bidding the whole wide world rejoice,
 When Love speaks over the sea.
Love with a sword to wield for right,
Love with a heart to conquer might,
Love which will scorn Hate's ways of fright—
 Love speaks over the sea.

Alone

I

I THOUGHT I was alone when John died—
John with the rough strong arms
And heavy manly voice.
But there was John's son
With his damp warm face against
 my cheek,
And his small fingers tight
 about my neck.

II

I thought I was alone when
 little John forgot
To talk or move or want a
 thing in all the world
 that I could give—
But the old house grew
 small to press invisible
 arms of sympathy about me.
I could not be alone where
 in old days
My father and my mother
 had watched birth enter the
 door and death go out.

III

I thought I was alone when
 singing flames
Made music in the walls
 and rafters of the house and
 left but ashes when the
 song was done.
But the warm blood
 which moved through
 limbs and the old
 thoughts which walked
 within my brain—told

me the past was with me
still. I could not
be alone as long as I
could love remembering.

The Muse to the Poet

EYES aglow with rapture,
Eyes afire with light,
You must quickly capture
That supreme delight;
Ancient purple mountains
Rising from blue seas,
Silver splashing fountains,
Fragrant blooming trees;
Golden harvests swaying
In the summer air,
Forest creatures playing,
Maidens tall and fair;
Sturdy zestful toilers,
Cities clean and free,
Lands without despoilers,
All in harmony;
All the merry madness
Of children gay and strong—
What you see in gladness
You must tell in song.

Torn and tragic voices,
 Rent by poignant pain;
Earth no more rejoices—
 Loss has conquered gain;
Words of strong men failing
 In the dreadful fight;
Little children wailing
 In the dark, cold night;
Women bent and weeping
 By lonely bitter graves;
Sobs instead of sleeping,
 Clanking chains of slaves;
Words of sullen workers
 Tyranny holds fast;
Thin pale speech of shirkers,
 Shrieks of the night blast;
Sounds of wild, bold badness,
 Voices of harsh wrong—
What you hear in sadness
 You must tell in song.

A tidal wave of feeling
 Comes pressing on your spirit,
A throbbing glow revealing
 The passion you inherit.
The singing, buoyant pleasure
 Of ancient sunlit days,
The stately solemn measure
 Of ancient tragic lays;

The richness of men's giving,
Their deathless high devotion;
The noble joys of living,
The poetry of motion;
Love's magic transformation
Of every human face,
Fear's blighting agitation,
The haunting dreams of grace;
Peace quieting pain's deep sobs,
Right victor over wrong—
What you feel in heart-throbs
You must tell in song.

The Trail of A Hundred Years¹

ALONG the trail of a hundred years,
With the thrill of their joys and the pang of
their fears,
Singing the song of the glad new day,
Winged with the rapture of birds in May,
The great hope has moved with triumphant
stride,
The great word has sounded in solemn pride.
The call of the Master has come to the world,
With his trumpet blast and his flag unfurled,
With his hosts assembled in armor bright,
Moving out to the great stern fight.

¹ Missionary Centenary verses.

The watchword has come from His lips
divine:

"Go forth to conquer. The world is mine."

Along the trail of a hundred years,
With its gladness and sadness, its laughter
and tears,

Quiet brave men have climbed to the heights,
Seeing in vision glad, rapturous sights,
Statesmen of God, and shepherds bold,
Gathering nations into the fold.

Patient strong women in far sad lands,
Clasping the helpless with helping hands,
Casting the love of self aside,
With the homelight bright in their eyes when
they died,

All these have followed the voice divine:
"Go forth to conquer. The world is mine."

At the end of the trail of a hundred years
The narrow way widens and there appears
The broad highway of the days to be,
With marching armies of men set free.
The world moves out from its dark eclipse
Pressing the goblet of life to its lips.
In every land a new wind blows,
And eyes are turning from old black woes.

A thousand new hopes are born in a day
As the Lord Christ moves on the great highway.

And his voice rings out his vast design:
"Go forth to conquer. The world is mine."

A Query

I WONDER if some day I'll write a song
Where lonely words are wedded in pure joy,
Where living phrases feast and dance and
sing,
Where mighty thoughts speak in high august
tones,
Where human hearts can hear their hopes and
fears
Marching in corridors of haunting speech,
Where love is scattering sunbeams of red gold
With glad abandon on the souls of men—
I wonder if some day I'll write a song.

A Song of America

AMERICA my heart's land,
My singing is for thee,
America the home land
Of rapturous liberty.

America the glad land,
Scattering joy and song,
America the strong land,
Fierce battler against wrong.

America the friendly land,
Face smiling and eyes bright,
America the stern land
In war's imperial might.

America the broad land
From east to western sea,
America the high land
Of white-peaked mystery.

America the man's land,
Strong limbed and full of power,
America the woman's land
Fair blooming like a flower.

America the children's land
Of mirth and merry plays,
America the old folk's land
Of golden sunset days.

America my heart's land,
My singing is for thee,
America the home land
Of rapturous liberty.



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